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PIC: DEBMALYA MALLICK

The New Indian Express wishes its readers a Happy Independence Day

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BACK TO SCHOOL

Classes 9-12 from Aug 23 in dists with low positivity rate

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

THE government is planning to reopen schools for Classes 9 to 12 from August 23 in districts that have less than 2 per cent Covid positivity rate, said Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai on Saturday after a Covid review meeting. Detailed standard operating procedures on conducting classes will be issued soon. Also, these districts will not have any Covid-related restrictions, he added.

The SOP on reopening schools will specify the number of students per class and the vaccination plan for parents, teaching and non-teaching staff. If the Covid-positivity rate goes above 2 per cent, schools have to be shut for a week and reopened only after proper sanitisation, he said.

No lockdown in Bengaluru

The government is not thinking of imposing a lockdown in Bengaluru as the Covid-positivity rate is at 0.75 per cent. BBMP Chief Commissioner Gaurav Gupta has been given full powers and instructed to monitor Covid cases every day.

"Now, beds are vacant. If 40 per cent of oxygenated beds are occupied, the government will consider taking further action to control cases," Bommai said.

This time, the focus is on the health of children, as there is a fear that they would be affected the most during the Covid third wave. P9

CM shuns zero traffic

In what comes as a huge relief to motorists in Bengaluru, CM Basavaraj Bommai has refused zero-traffic privileges for himself, asking the police to consider him as a "common man", and ensure that ambulance movement is given priority. P7

Towards the end of first wave, the State was reporting only around 200 cases per day. The present situation is way more alarming

Basavaraj Bommai, Chief Minister

Taliban advance further, at Kabul's doorstep

Afghan President Ghani says he won't give up achievements of past 20 yrs, expresses hope that peace talks will succeed

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

THE Taliban on Saturday continued its aggressive offensive, taking two more provinces and reached the outskirts of Afghan capital Kabul. With the capture of Asadabad, the capital of Kunar province, and Sharan in Paktika province, 20 out of Afghanistan's 34 provincial capitals are now under the militia's control.

Late in the night, Mazar-e-Sharif, the fourth-largest city, also fell to the Taliban.

Amid speculation that he would resign and leave the country along with family, Afghan President Ashraf Ghani on Saturday said he would not give up the progress the country has made in the past 20 years of non-Taliban rule.

In his television address to the nation, he listed remobilisation of troops as his top priority. He also said consultations were taking place both domestically and abroad to end the war and that the results would be known soon.

"I will not let the imposed war on people cause more deaths. I have started extensive consultations inside the government with the elders, political leaders, representatives of people, and international partners on achieving a reasonable and certain political solution," he said.

Abdullah Abdullah, the chairman of the High Council for National Reconciliation, is taking part in the Doha peace talks aimed at ending the war. According to reports, the Afghan government has seen the writing on the wall and is keen to stitch together a peace deal to end the conflict.

If current trends continue, the Taliban could take Kabul earlier than projected. But there is also a possibility of the militia deciding not to attack the capital but surround it from all sides, cut supplies and force it to surrender.

Meanwhile, the main radio station in Kandahar, which fell to the insurgents earlier this week, was renamed Voice of Sharia, or Islamic law, the Associated Press reported. The station will no longer play music and Quran recitations will be mandatory, it added. P11,13

US troops

A fresh contingent of Marines arrived in Kabul on Saturday as part of a 3,000-troop force intended to secure an airlift of US Embassy personnel and Afghan allies

daCunha/AB/762

Bombay HC stays parts of new IT Rules

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Mumbai

UPHOLDING media's right to Freedom of Speech, the Bombay High Court on Saturday stayed two subsections of the Information Technology (Guidelines for Intermediaries & Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021, which mandated publishers to adhere to a Code of Ethics as prescribed by it.

Staying subsections 9(1) and 9(3), the bench of Chief Justice Dipankar Datta and Justice G S Kulkarni, said: "Insofar as Rule 9 is concerned, we found it prima facie to be an intrusion of the petitioners' rights under Article 19(1) (a). Therefore, we have stayed clauses 9(1) and 9(3). The rule is not stayed in its entirety."

The bench passed the interim order on the petitions filed by AGIJ Promotion of Nineteenonea Media Pvt. Ltd, which runs a legal news portal, and journalist Nikhil Wagle.

PART OF RULE 9 STAYS: COURT

The bench made it clear that the rule was not stayed in entirety. Also, Rule 9(2), which warns publishers of action for violating laws, remains operational

While subsection 9(1) mandates publishers to adhere to the norms of Journalistic Conduct of the Press Council of India under the Press Council Act, 1978, and Programme Code under section 5 of the Cable TV Networks Regulation Act, 1995, clause 9(2) envisages a three-tier redress mechanism in case of violation.

The bench turned down Additional Solicitor General's request for a stay of the order. It also refused to stay rules 14 and 16 of the guidelines.

NATIONWIDE	AUG 13	AUG 14
Fresh cases	40,120	38,667
Recoveries	45,295	35,743
Deaths	505	478

KARNATAKA	AUG 13	AUG 14
Fresh cases	1,669	1,632
Recoveries	1,672	1,612
Deaths	22	25

EXPRESS READ

August 14 to be Partition Horrors Remembrance Day

New Delhi: PM Narendra Modi announced on Saturday that August 14 will now be observed as Partition Horrors Remembrance Day, and said the pain of Partition can never be forgotten. PTI

Twitter unlocks accounts of Rahul Gandhi, Congress

New Delhi: Twitter on Saturday restored the account of Rahul Gandhi, alongside those of the Congress and other leaders, amid an ongoing tiff between the social media platform and the party. PTI

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